



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION RECOGNIZES AIR QUALITY AWARENESS WEEK APRIL 28 - MAY 2 ALL TENNESSEANS CAN TAKE STEPS TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY

Nashville, Tenn. - In recognition of National Air Quality Awareness Week, April 28 - May 2, 2008, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation encourages all Tennesseans to take steps to improve air quality. Air Quality Awareness week coincides with the beginning of the official ozone-forecasting season, which begins May 1.

This year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established a new standard for the air pollutant ozone. In March, EPA strengthened its national ambient air quality standards for ground-level ozone - the primary component of smog - from 0.084 to 0.075 parts per million. Under the new, more stringent standard, the public can expect to see more alerts for ozone levels without any change in air quality measures.

"Tennessee uses a network of 25 ground-level ozone-monitoring stations across the state to assess air quality," said Tracy Carter, Environment and Conservation's Senior Director for Air Resources. "Our meteorologists then produce ozone forecasts through a model that blends real-time and historical ozone data with present and predicted weather patterns to project ozone formation for the next forecast period."

Working with local media outlets and regional clean air partnerships across Tennessee, Environment and Conservation also has developed an Air Quality Alert system to inform residents when air quality becomes unhealthy for sensitive groups. It is even more important for people to take steps to improve air quality when unhealthy days are forecast.

Steps people can take to improve the quality of their air include: reducing vehicle emissions by carpooling, taking public transportation, organizing errands for efficiency and keeping vehicles well maintained. Energy conservation is important to improving air quality, and people can make a difference by utilizing Energy Star appliances, using compact fluorescent light bulbs, weather-stripping doors and windows, adding insulation and buying Green Power where it's available.

Limiting open burning is also an important element to improving air quality, and there are items that are illegal to burn at any time during the year to protect the air from pollution.

In Tennessee, it is illegal to burn:

- Tires and rubber products
- Vinyl siding and shingles
- Asphalt shingles and other asphalt roofing materials and demolition debris
- Building material, construction debris and mobile homes
- Plywood, oriented strand board and treated wood, including railroad ties
- Asbestos-containing materials
- Aerosol cans and food cans
- Copper wire and electrical wires

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- Plastics and other synthetic materials
- Paper products, cardboard and newspaper
- Household trash
- Leaves, branches and trees not grown on site

Recycling and composting are alternatives to open burning recommended by the Department of Environment and Conservation.

State law allows for a maximum civil penalty of up to \$25,000 per day for each day of violation of the Air Quality Act. For more information on what may and may not be burned under Tennessee regulations, please refer to the open burning brochure online at www.tn.gov/environment/apc/pdf/OpenBurningBrochure.pdf.

To burn items that are not prohibited by Tennessee's air quality regulations, state law requires citizens to get a burning permit from the Department of Agriculture's Division of Forestry before conducting open, outdoor burning during official fire season, which extends from Oct. 15 through May 15. During fire season, anyone burning without a permit is subject to a Class C misdemeanor, and local governments may have burning ordinances or require their own permits.

For more information on air quality in Tennessee, please visit www.tn.gov/environment/apc and click on the Clean Air Tennessee link.

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